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MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

TOWARD AN AMERICAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

THE EDITORS

SOCIALISM VIA KIBBUTZIM?

URSULA WASSERMANN

REPLIES TO MR. BITTELMAN

THE EDITORS

VOL. 3

7

EDITORS . . . LEO HUBERMAN . . . PAUL M. SWEETZ

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

The big news in the MR shop these days is that the shop itself has moved. The small three-room apartment of one of the editors which has also been serving as MR's office finally got so jammed up with books, pamphlets, magazines, supplies, and the like that it became almost impossible to get to the stove to fry an egg. So MR just *had* to acquire a home of its own.

After weeks of prowling into stores and lofts in search of a lot of space for little money, we finally found something which, though costing a bit more than we wanted to pay, suits our needs very nicely. It's a "professional apartment" around the corner from where we were—light, clean, and not too noisy. The address is 218 West 10th Street, New York 14; phone number: Oregon 5-6939.

While the move to an office solves one problem—that of space—it obviously creates another—that of additional expense. This is in addition to other recent cost increases: printers' bills have skyrocketed, and all supplies are up. We don't want to raise the subscription rate, already too high for many readers. But we may be forced to as a sheer matter of

(continued on inside back cover)

TOWARD AN AMERICAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

For the past week or so the Republicans and their agents and allies among the Democrats—the disreputable McCarthys and McCarrans along with the oh-so-respectable Stassens—have been going for the Truman administration hammer and tongs. Their main “charge,” sometimes largely hidden behind a red smokescreen, is that back in 1949 the State Department was planning to dump Chiang Kai-shek, recognize the new government of China, and set the stage for a peaceful settlement of major international issues in the Far East. They claim, in other words, that the Truman administration was once orienting its policies toward peace rather than war in Asia. No more horrible crime, in the eyes of these self-appointed keepers of the national conscience!

And how does the Truman administration react? By proudly proclaiming that it was indeed for peace? By branding its accusers as warmongers and murderers? Not at all. The Truman administration flatly denies all the accusations. In doing so, it accepts their implication; it fixes the brand of warmonger and murderer on itself rather than on its enemies. Moreover, in denying the charges of the McCarthys, Truman and Acheson in reality become their slaves. As James Reston recently wrote in commenting on the current state of Senator McCarthy’s political fortunes, “So long as Mr. McCarthy, by his violent charges and tactics, can force the administration to make one policy concession after another in the Far East in order to prove its violent anti-Communism at home, the question of his temporary ups and downs is quite secondary.” (*New York Times*, October 7, 1951.) Truer words were never spoken.

The terrible truth is that the people who are now running this country are playing cheap politics with the great issues of war and peace. “A considerable number,” in the words of I. F. Stone who needlessly apologized for the language he was about to use, “are thieves, liars, and cowards. They will do anything to save their political skins, up to and including another world war to shut off all criticism and ensure their victory at the next election.” Stone’s angry indictment should be pondered by every American:

You can always count on the Truman gang to follow the line of least resistance, and to subordinate human welfare to political

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expediency. Right now the Republicans really smell blood in the Jessup inquiry, and the easy way out is to step up the Korean war and extend it to China.

I use the term "liars" and "cowards" because there is no doubt in my mind that Acheson and Jessup did favor recognition of Red China as soon as politically possible. The private circular sent out by the State Department to all embassies in December 1949, and leaked out of MacArthur-dominated Tokyo in January 1950, shows that Acheson had given up Chiang for lost and wanted public opinion prepared for the fall of Formosa to the Reds.

When the news leaked out of Tokyo, Truman made it clear at a press conference on January 5, 1950—his last courageous stand on the China question—that the administration did not intend to intervene in the Chinese civil war on Chiang's side.

Instead of manfully standing up and defending these policies as sound, instead of warning the American people that the alternative is to spill the blood of its sons for years in support of a corrupt and incompetent Chinese dictator, the administration is trying to fight the Charlie McCarthy of the China lobby by disingenuous statement and ignominious belly-crawling. . . .

In this situation, the Truman gang has the one remedy, its poisonous panacea for all the national ailments, its prescription for full employment and its formula for electioneering success. That formula is war.

The way the Truman gang is headed is to answer the objections of the Republicans stooging for the China lobby—by going to war against Communist China. Atom bombs on China would blast Republican hopes at home. I think at bottom it's that simple and that dreadful, and I think we Americans have as little control over the decision as people living under dictatorship. (*The Daily Compass*, October 5, 1951.)

Stone here signalizes an extremely important development of the last two years. It has long been obvious—at least since the early days of World War II—that the American economy can prosper only under the impact of massive military spending. It is now becoming no less obvious that neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have any but military answers to their purely political problems. In American capitalism, all roads lead to war.

This headlong rush to war of course requires an ideological rationalization, and the American ruling class has found it in the holy crusade in defense of "freedom" and "western civilization." The irony is that with every day that passes there is less freedom and less civilization to defend. Never have American liberties been so insecure as they are today; never have cynicism and corruption been so widespread.

The dry-rot reaches deep into the moral fibre of the country. Young people, especially young men, faced with years of hated military service, with a good chance of meeting a gruesome death in some faraway Korean foxhole, lose interest in planning for the future and give themselves up to aimless and largely futile efforts to snatch some kind of pleasure from the present. The ruling class, driven to justify what can never be justified by the genuine Christian and humanist standards of western civilization, is producing a new type of moral monster. Witness, as an example, General "Rosie" O'Donnell, the original chief of bombing operations in Korea. General O'Donnell testified in the MacArthur hearings that when he got to Korea he wanted to fight the war by "really dish[ing] out some severe destruction" and he explained that this meant "burning out" five major cities in North Korea and "destroy[ing] completely every one of about eighteen major strategic targets." The General would have "taken care" of the "humane aspects of the problem" by telling the North Koreans "to either stop the aggression . . . or they better have their wives and children and bed-rolls to go down with them because there is not going to be anything left up in North Korea to return to." How easily the General's humanity is satisfied! As he left the stand, up stepped Senator Hickenlooper: "I congratulate you, General," said the Senator, "on your Americanism."

Nor is such Americanism the exclusive possession of air force generals and Republican senators. If it were, we would be hard put to it to account for Mr. Gordon Dean, the eminent lawyer who provides civilian leadership to the nation's atomic program. On October 5th, Mr. Dean delivered himself of a number of weighty moral pronouncements—among others, that the United States has "complete justification" for using atomic weapons, provided only, it appears, that they are "no more destructive than . . . necessary to meet the situation in question." This is perfect Americanism, O'Donnell-Hickenlooper brand.

This mish-mash of suppression and corruption and cynicism and heartless brutality is the "freedom" and "civilization" our rulers are fighting to defend, and inviting all and sundry to help them defend—or else. Is it surprising that more and more people are showing less and less enthusiasm for the undertaking?

We do not speak of the Soviet Union and China; after all, they are known to be prejudiced. We do not even speak of India which, to judge from its blunt refusal to have any part in the Japanese "peace" treaty, appears to be less than enthusiastic about importing the current brand of Americanism to Asia. These are, to be sure, the three largest countries in the world, containing nearly half

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of the human race, and it is only official Washington myopia which can regard their views as unimportant. But no less important, at least as an indication of dominant trends, is the *changing* attitude toward the United States in the very heart of western civilization itself—in France and Italy and Britain.

A keen observer who has spent most of his time in these three countries during the last two years recently sent us the following report after a long motor trip in France and Italy:

It is very clear (1) that anti-American sentiment is spreading rapidly in both countries—in France the difference compared to just a few months ago is specially striking; and (2) that there is a widening gap between people and government in both countries.

I think one can say that over 50 percent of the people oppose governmental policies, especially in regard to rearmament and war; another 25 percent are dissatisfied but confused; only the remaining 25 percent can be counted as definitely in the American camp. The point is that in recent months the real objectives and dangers of American policy have become very clear; and the great majority of people over here, whatever their politics, definitely do not want war. In addition, the economic situation has deteriorated under the impact of the arms program to the point where this alone is sufficient to set in motion a strong current of opposition to present policies. The great problem, of course, is how this opposition will be translated into action, and on this it is still too early to speak with confidence.

The American occupation—and it is regarded as precisely that even by those who favor it—is producing a most virulent form of anti-Americanism which it is not at all pleasant to find oneself the object of. You can imagine, for example, the reaction to the occupation by American troops of new housing projects which were being built for urban workers. In addition, the behavior of our troops (often fresh from Germany) is frequently such as to fan the flames of anti-Americanism.

In Britain, the situation is in many ways different, but the underlying trends are the same. The driving force behind what is now called "Bevanism" is revolt against American domination which is—quite rightly—held responsible for falling living standards and growing threats of war. The full strength of Bevanism is not yet evident; the British labor movement is so structured as practically to conceal revolt unless and until it actually succeeds. But even American reporters who would like to be able to minimize the significance of Bevanism cannot hide the fact that it permeates the labor movement and that related anti-American sentiments are

developing far beyond the ranks of the Labor Party. Here are some excerpts from a report on the election campaign by Raymond Daniell:

If the Labor Party's conference at Scarborough left any doubts that the Party intends to cash in to the fullest extent on envy, malice, and spite latent in this country against the United States in its campaign, its supporting press is doing the best to dispel them.

Dislike of American policy and Americans has been growing lately. It is not confined to the left wing of the Labor Party but is beginning to afflict people in both political organizations who stand to the Left of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. . . .

What the Labor Party is seeking to do is to gather votes from all those among floating voters who don't like the United States by reiterating the underlying complaints against the United States and suggesting that if the Conservatives win in the election October 25 they will follow a policy of slavish subservience to Washington. . . .

Richard Crossman, a supporter of Aneurin Bevan, devoted part of his weekly column [in *The Mirror*] to the same theme [that is, America as an election issue]. Talking to delegates at the Scarborough conference, he said, he received the impression that they doubted the propaganda about Russia's aggressive intentions, suspected that Britain's enlarged rearmament program "had more to do with Washington than with Moscow," and resented the "fact that Americans are demanding further cuts in our standard of living while their own is still rising."

People fear, said Mr. Crossman, that a Conservative government would support Americans "right or wrong" and they want their Labor government to be "much firmer" with Washington.

He concluded that "these views reflect the attitude of a very large slice of non-party public opinion which is just beginning to ask itself what the election is about." (*New York Times*, October 8, 1951.)

By the time this is in print, the results of the October 25th general election will be known. But it is already safe to say that if Labor wins it will be because it discovered how to exploit the growing anti-Americanism of the British people. On the other hand, if Labor loses, the chances are that Bevan and his friends will soon take over the leadership of the party. In either case, no immediate change in British subservience to Washington is to be looked for; but if the trends of the recent past continue for another six months or a year, an altogether new situation may develop.

Popular, grass-roots resistance to American domination, to American policies, to the whole current conception of Americanism; hatred of war, growing disbelief in Russia's alleged aggressive intentions, growing conviction that Washington and not Moscow is the source of the war danger—these are the moods of peoples everywhere, not only "behind the iron curtain" but also in the heart of "western civilization."

Everywhere, that is, but right here at home. Here, sad to relate, there are few signs of growing resistance, few indications of determination on the part of the American people to return to those worthier conceptions of Americanism which once so powerfully attracted the downtrodden and oppressed of the whole world. Here, the masses are still largely apathetic, and those who ought to be taking the leadership in a fight for peace and decency—the labor leaders, the New Dealers, the liberals—are either openly stooging for the reactionaries or are turning tail and running for cover. The liberal slogan, it is said, and not without justification, is: "Fight hell! We've begun to surrender."

What are the reasons for this seeming apathy and cowardice in the United States? Is it because Americans are kept in such ignorance by the big-business press and radio that they have no idea what's going on? That is certainly part of the reason. But it isn't all, by any means. Many, many people know and yet remain silent and inactive. If only those who already know could be moved to action, we would have a resistance movement in this country ten times its present puny size.

Is it plain fear of the cold terror which is the counterpart of the cold war? That also is part of the explanation, but again it should not be overrated. Basically, all people are alike, and Americans are certainly as brave as others. In facing the dangers and vicissitudes of war in Korea, for example, American GIs display a courage worthy of a far better cause—and GIs are fairly representative of the people as a whole.

No, ignorance and fear, while they play a part, do not provide the explanation we are seeking. There is a more fundamental reason for the weakness of the American resistance movement. The average person, no matter how well informed and courageous, will not sacrifice himself alone for a cause he considers hopeless. And it is just such a feeling of aloneness and hopelessness that now afflicts the vast majority of those whose every instinct cries out against what is being done in the name of the American people.

It is *this* feeling that must be overcome if we are to have a resistance movement of which we can be proud and which will entitle us once again to hold up our heads in the world family of

peoples. In place of the devastating sense of aloneness, we must develop a sense of *solidarity* among all those who stand for peace and decency in the affairs of men. In place of the debilitating sense of hopelessness, we must substitute the conviction that for most of the human race a new and better day is dawning and that we Americans can play an honorable role in hastening its advent and maximizing its benefits.

To dispel the sense of hopelessness may not be easy, but at any rate the way it can and should be done is apparent. No one who thinks in historical terms and understands the enormous potentialities for good of modern science can be hopeless. A new world is being born, and, however severe the birthpains, it is a world which for the first time offers more than drudgery, exploitation, ignorance, disease, and starvation to the vast majority of mankind. The words of the "International," the great socialist anthem which is heard all too rarely nowadays, are at long last being translated into practice:

Arise, ye pris'ners of starvation!
 Arise, ye wretched of the earth,
 For Justice thunders condemnation,
 A better world's in birth.

This is a profoundly *hopeful* prospect, one worth working for and fighting for and, if need be, dying for. If more Americans are not inspired by it, the fault can only lie with us who know the truth but do not teach it. Let us resolve here and now to redouble our efforts to spread our life-giving message of hope. There can be no surer way of bringing new recruits to our cause.

How to overcome the sense of aloneness which at present paralyzes so many people is a different problem. Its roots are both psychological and economic. The nonconformist, the dissenter, the radical are isolated and put under terrific pressure by a loaded and manipulated "public opinion." And those who still refuse to buckle under are fired from their jobs and blacklisted in their trade—left alone in the most starkly economic sense of the term.

Here again the remedy is clear. To *their* ostracism we must oppose *our* solidarity, and it must be economic as well as psychological. No one who is at all familiar with the condition of the American Left at the present time can believe that as much is being done as might be done. There are too many sects and cliques which are often nearly as hostile to a newcomer as is the "official" capitalist society from which he is a refugee. There is inadequate appreciation of the need for genuine human warmth and companionship as an antidote to aloneness. The possibilities of breaking through economic boy-

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cotts and blacklists—for example, by organizing cooperatives or even profitable companies in various lines of production or trade—have not even been explored. By these and other means, the sense of solidarity which gives people the will to fight can be *created*. And, as the proverb says, where there's a will there's a way.

The American ruling class is playing a losing game. It has sown dragon's teeth on a scale unprecedented in world history, and it is already confronted by the growing legions of its enemies. What part shall we Americans play in bringing about its defeat? That is the question with which we are now faced. It is certain that we can do much more than we have been doing. Will we?

(October 15, 1951.)

Let us not succumb to the monstrous doctrine that human nature makes war inevitable. We need in this country to replace apathy by interest; ignorance by insight; and dull resignation to an inevitable war by a luminous and determined resolution.

Don't wait for peace to come to you, weakly wished for, but unbought. Do not imagine for one moment that you have no responsibility here. Are you not free American citizens? Then wage the peace. Wage the peace in classrooms, in your organizations, in your communities, with your ballots, with your dollars, with your brains, with all your hearts. Teach your fellow citizens that a third world war need not happen, and that they can help to prevent it.

—William G. Carr

Cruelty is a contagion spread from dying tyrannies, great or small, which endeavor, as they vanish, to make everything vanish with them. The fear from which it issues is the fear of losing power, and the cowardice which is its companion is timidity before a better world. Men who seek by cruelty to continue in the old way are men afraid to try a new.

But we, if we are to fear anything, ought rather to fear the old ways, the old intolerances and crimes, the old myths which once obscured our vision. We are cast upon the future without reluctance and even without regret, as finding there the substance of desire. If the present rulers of earth can be persuaded into peace and fraternity, we shall do all we can to bring them thither. But if they continue to offer us nothing but tears, then we, the peoples of the world, must take the world and mold it to our wish.

—Barrows Dunham, *Man Against Myth*

SOCIALISM VIA KIBBUTZIM?

BY URSULA WASSERMANN

Socialism in Israel today faces a supreme challenge. The country that was born out of socialist dreams is in danger of being pushed into the capitalist camp in the world-wide struggle between East and West. The old men of this young Republic, the settled men in this restless land, the frightened men of this courageous people, have teamed up with the past against all those determined to march toward the future.

The struggle in foreign policy is reflected within the country itself where the many islands of socialism are in danger of being engulfed in the sea of the capitalist state. The question which faces every socialist in Israel today is whether the collective settlements of the original settlers—deeply rooted in the very rocks of this stony land—which withstood the pressure of the middle-class immigration of the thirties, will be able to withstand the onrush of the mass immigration of the fifties—an immigration of traders and small merchants, of shopkeepers and white collar workers, of declassed bourgeoisie and upstart petty bourgeoisie, an immigration of speculators and black marketeers. This must be an issue of deep concern to all progressives.

Let no one forget that socialism in Israel did not spring from an indigenous proletariat or an impoverished peasantry. Socialism was imported to Palestine, ready-made, by young middle-class boys and girls whose greatest ambition was to become drawers of water and tillers of land, youngsters who dreamt of making the desert bloom—and who made it bloom as they transformed miles of sand into cabbage fields and mountains of rock into vineyards. In contrast to other colonizers, young Jews came to Palestine from Eastern Europe, not as empire-builders nor as fortune-hunters, but came to live the hard life, the tough life, the life full of deprivations; to live it, because in the end this was to be the good life. For the future was promises, and the promise was socialism.

They became workers and farmers, living together in collective settlements based on the very letter of the book of socialism. They

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fought their battles against the hard soil and the cruel climate no less valiantly than they fought against Arab feudalism and British imperialism. And if they were victorious—this little band of settlers against the mighty armies massed around them—it was because their faith was deeper and their will was stronger and their way of life superior to that of feudal landlords and colonial officials. It was socialism that made the early settlements survive, socialism that brought Israel into being. But three years after the birth of Israel, there is grave doubt as to whether socialism will survive in Israel, for today the collective settlements are in a precarious minority position.

The recent split in one of the large federations of *kibbutzim* or collective settlements, the Federation *Kibbutz Hameuchad*, only highlights what has long been a latent crisis in the *kibbutz* movement. It points up the causes, and is symptomatic of the effects of years of strain and tension within the movement itself, and between the movement as a whole on the one hand and the state on the other.

For some time past, and more pronouncedly so since the establishment of the State of Israel, there has been a growing trend away from collective settlements in favor of private industry and individual or semi-private and cooperative farming. The *kibbutz* movement, on the other hand, the collective economic units which alone had made the original settling of Jewish immigrants in Palestine possible, and without which the state could never have come into being, has been first neutralized, then put on the defensive, and of late—a large part of it, at least—been sent into the political wilderness.

The *kibbutz* movement, originally founded by idealistic youths who escaped persecution both as socialists and as Jews in Czarist Russia, and later, from a semi-fascist Poland, did pioneer work in every sphere of social endeavor. Collective agricultural settlements made Jewish immigration possible, both from an economic and a security point of view; the stony soil, suffering from centuries of erosion, would have frustrated the greatest individual effort; defense of their hard-won and newly fertile acres in a frequently hostile surrounding showed community rather than individual farming to be the better part of wisdom. And, apart from the field of agriculture, the *kibbutz* movement stood behind every social, cultural, and political movement that grew out of Jewish Palestine. The *Haganah*, and especially the shock-troops of the *Palmach*, drew their main strength and their very life-blood from the collective settlements. Without the *Palmach*, the war of independence could not have been won; and yet, with victory barely secure, the *Palmach*, on the per-

sonal orders of Ben Gurion, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, had its wings clipped; instead of a revolutionary and almost autonomous branch of the army—an elite corps whose glory coming generations will sing with awe and admiration—its members became incorporated into the regular army, the safe army, the army which would not create, but would defend the already existing state and with it, the *status quo*. And with the cessation of an independent *Palmach*, the *kibbutz* movement suffered its first severe blow at the hands of the new state of Israel.

In the past, the *chalutz* reserves in the diaspora—the thousands of young Jewish pioneers trained to come and settle the land of Palestine—had provided a source of continual expansion for the *kibbutzim*. After 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, Nazi persecution trapped tens of thousands of trained Jewish youths; many others perished through the horrors of war. By the end of the war, the reserves had been reduced to almost nothing. The mass immigration after the end of the Mandate, contained few—if any—pioneers either able or willing to brave the hard realities of collective living. Too many of those who entered Israel after 1948 had spent the better part of a decade in camps of one sort or another—from concentration camp to refugee camp to D.P. camp—camps which had left them with an almost physical horror of any kind of communal living. Moreover, having been taken care of, for better or worse—and usually it had been for worse—for ten years out of their adult lives, many of the newcomers found it hard to adjust to any kind of situation where they were forced to take initiative or share responsibility. Hitler did more than burn the bodies of European Jewry; he damaged the souls of most of the survivors. Many of the new immigrants were, indeed, too injured in body and soul to be able to withstand the rigors which come with transforming stones into vineyards and deserts into cabbage patches. In addition, many of those who entered the new state came not because they had been trained to go on the land, but because there was no other land to go to. Few of them were physically or ideologically prepared to enter collective settlements.

Between the time of the establishment of the state in May 1948 and the end of 1950 — a period during which the total Jewish population in Israel nearly doubled — the population in the *kibbutzim* did not increase in the same ratio. While there occurred an absolute increase from 43,258 in May 1948 to 72,904 at the end of 1950, there occurred at the same time a relative decrease in terms of total population. The inhabitants of collective settlements, in proportion to the rest of the population, formed roughly seven percent of the total Jewish population in May 1948

and only six percent of the total two and a half years later. When these figures are compared with those of individual farms, grouped together in smallholder settlements or on a cooperative basis, which have trebled during the same period, from 18,268 in May 1948 to 65,838 in December 1950 — or, expressed in percentages of total population, from less than three percent to six and a half percent — we clearly see the ever-growing trend away from collective farming. Followed to its logical conclusions, this trend will undoubtedly lead to predominance of cooperatives, or even *moshavot*, which are ordinary rural villages based on private land ownership and private enterprise, and which today already, in terms of total population (98,000), form the largest single type of agricultural settlements in Israel.

At a nation-wide conference of the *Chever Hakevutzot*—the *Mapai*-affiliated federation of collective settlements — a speaker pointed out that while 250,000 Jews had entered Israel during a 12-month period in 1948-49, only one percent of this mass immigration, or 2,500 had been absorbed in the *kibbutzim* during the same period. In addition to the fact that new immigrants are loath to enter collective settlements, the *kibbutzim* lost many of their older and finest members during World War II, when they volunteered to serve in the British Army, and especially during the Jewish war of independence when many of the settlements became front-line units—such as Negba and Yad Mordecai, to name but two of the most glorious.

Various steps have been taken by the several federations to remedy the serious situation, but no real solution seems in sight. *Kibbutz Artzi*, *Mapam*-affiliated federation of *kibbutzim*, today offers newcomers a "trial period" of one year, and a compensation of I£100 at the end of the year if the potential settler decides not to stay, so as to enable him to start life again elsewhere in the country. *Kibbutz Hameuchad*, at its 1949 conference, decided to mobilize ten percent of its effective membership for work in immigrant camps and abroad for the purpose of recruiting new settlers. For, apart from the fact that a constant decrease in population in proportion to the total number of inhabitants threatens the basic political and ideological existence of the movement, the settlements also suffer from an acute shortage of labor. World War II brought much economic improvement in agricultural settlements: products fetched high prices, agriculture expanded and new industries were established within the *kibbutzim*; moreover, at the end of the War of Liberation, most *kibbutzim* acquired new land, as, for example, *Kibbutz Hameuchad*, whose total land area increased from 320,000 dunams (approximately 80,000 acres) in 1946 to 500,000 in 1949, or an increase

of nearly 60 percent. Yet, in 1949, the same federation rejected Ben Gurion's proposal that *kibbutzim* hire new immigrants, living close by, as paid labor.

The refusal to use hired labor, which has for long been a cardinal principle of the *kibbutz* movement, based on the socialist creed that no man shall profit from the sweat of another man's brow, touches the very core of the conflict which today threatens to tear the movement asunder. For while the principle of "from each according to his ability to each according to his need" remains of necessity the *sine qua non* of any socialist society, and while it could be applied to collective settlements as long as they existed as individual, socialist units, almost entirely self-supporting and self-sufficient, it has in practice, if not in theory, been largely abandoned, simply because no socialist settlement can maintain its continued existence within the framework of a modern capitalist society. And Israel today is a capitalist state.

The vast majority of *kibbutznicks* still refuse to face this harsh reality, and platform speakers continue to attack the use of hired labor; yet, in many *kibbutzim*, hired labor has, in fact, been used for some time past. Productivity must be increased if the ever-growing urban population is to be fed; new industries in collective settlements must be, and have been, established: to achieve this, the *kibbutz* can either increase mechanization, hire outside labor, or absorb new immigrants; all of these means have been, and are being used, and often all of them are employed at one and the same time. Mechanization is the means which any *kibbutz* would choose in preference to the large-scale absorption of untrained new immigrants, who would serve to lower the prevailing standard of living, or to the use of paid labor which would conflict with the movement's most cherished principles. Absorption of trained immigrants plus mechanization would offer a preferable choice, and one which would at least defend, if not raise, the present standard of living; yet, to achieve that, far more government assistance will be needed than has been forthcoming—assistance in the form of loans and subsidies, reduction in the cost of vocational training, as well as provision of better social services in the field of health, education, and housing. This applies especially to the younger *kibbutzim* which will not be content to wait for 25 years, as many of the older ones have done, for such basic modern conveniences as running water and refrigeration, electricity and rooms of their own. Without much greater government assistance than they have enjoyed in the past, or are likely to enjoy in the future, many of the new *kibbutzim* are bound to disintegrate.

Government assistance has, of course, come to some *kibbutzim*, but not to the movement as a whole, a large part of which has been driven into political opposition. To understand this opposition, it is necessary to explain briefly the position taken by the three main federations of *kibbutzim*. *Chever Hakevutzot* theoretically claims to favor individual rather than communal political affiliation, but is, in fact, exclusively affiliated to the right-wing Labor Party, *Mapai*. *Kibbutz Artzi*, on the contrary, insists on the collective affiliation of its members, so that each *kibbutz* becomes an entity, a functional cell of the party to which the federation is attached, namely left-wing *Mapam*. *Kibbutz Hameuchad*, before the recent split, maintained individual affiliation and consisted of so called "open *kibbutzim*", a majority of the members belonging to *Mapam*, with the minority tied to *Mapai*. With the growing tension within the labor movement, in city as well as country, and with the intensification of the class struggle, the conflicts among members of the same *kibbutz* with different political affiliations became so pronounced that an open split became, at last, unavoidable. The main point of conflict centered around the question of the type of education the children were to enjoy; the *Mapai* members of the various settlements were violently opposed to the Marxist trend in education on which the majority naturally insisted.

The basic conflict has not been resolved. The lines have been drawn closer, the ideological rift has become wider; but the role of the movement as a whole has been left in abeyance, with neither party to the conflict wishing to face the full impact of the seriousness of the crisis. Previous to the establishment of the state, the *kibbutz* movement was regarded as the vanguard of a socialist society. With the establishment of the state, there came a shift in emphasis, and while both the right wing and the left wing continue to claim the movement as their own—no government leader will make a speech in which he does not proudly proclaim his *kibbutznick* past, much as no American politician will fail to pay at least lip-service to the Declaration of Independence or the Bill of Rights—in their heart of hearts both must know that the ground is being cut from under their feet. The emphasis has shifted to the cities.

Within the framework of an independent state, with urban centers absorbing 80 percent of the total population, it becomes unavoidable for political leadership, too, to shift to the cities where the mass vote will serve to form the mass party. The right wing of the labor movement realized this full well: *Mapai*, soon after the establishment of the state, began to concentrate its activities in the urban and semi-urban centers; it entered into an alliance with right-wing elements at home and, desirous of American aid, bowed

to United States pressure abroad. *Mapai*—and the *kibbutznicks* among them—sacrificed the long-term struggle for socialism for the immediate and sweet pleasures and privileges of being the “ins” rather than the “outs.”

However, the left wing of the labor movement, in holding fast to their old loyalties, in insisting on the collective settlement as the primary, if not the exclusive, form of socialism, may be committing a fatal political error. New social conditions demand new social structures; it shows sentimentality rather than political wisdom to cling to the form more than to the substance. Collective settlements served their purpose, and served it well at a time of colonization; collective settlements can, in the future, once more perform an important function within the framework of a socialist society; but in a capitalist state, collective settlements, while they should not be abandoned, can never form the sole, or even the main basis for socialism. The bastion of socialism today must rest upon the masses of the urban industrial population.

The Communist Party has taken cognizance of this fact, and its increased vote at the recent elections is undoubtedly due to new support gained in the urban areas. The left-wing Labor Party, *Mapam*—under the leadership of *Hashomer Hatzair*, which has always regarded bridging the gap between town and country as one of the cardinal socialist principles—is theoretically aware of the increasing importance of the urban vote, but has so far failed to translate theoretical knowledge into effective political action. Until and unless a united Left in Israel faces this fact fully, it will fight a romantic but losing battle. It will rest on the laurels of the past rather than rely on the struggle for the future. Socialism cannot be achieved through the back-door. It knocks on every door, but it knocks loudest where the queue is longest. And the queue is very long—in the towns.

Milwaukee (UP) — Eddie Giencke of Milwaukee, an Army private, told recently of a sergeant who gave a lecture on how the new Army tried to keep brothers in the service together.

The sergeant asked the enlisted men:

“Anybody here got a brother he wants to be with?”

Private Giencke held up his hand.

“Where is your brother?” the sergeant asked.

“Home,” said Private Giencke.

The sergeant put him on K.P.

—*New York Times*, July 30, 1951

REPLY TO MR. BITTELMAN

BY THE EDITORS

In its issue of May 1951, *Political Affairs*, theoretical organ of the Communist Party, carried an article by Alexander Bittelman entitled "Where Is the *Monthly Review* Going?" Mr. Bittelman sets himself the task of examining MR's first two years of publication with the object of discovering "the political nature of the magazine and the direction in which it is going." His findings are extremely critical and his tone is openly hostile.

We have no objection to criticism—quite the contrary. But we do not see how any useful purpose can be served by sowing suspicions and stirring up quarrels in the American progressive movement today. The whole Left is under unprecedentedly savage attack from the ruling class. At this moment, Mr. Bittelman himself is under indictment on the fantastic charge of "conspiring to teach." The very existence of a legal opposition to ruling-class policies is ominously threatened. Under these conditions, it would be natural to assume that every one to the left of Center would be interested in rallying all possible support behind the struggle for survival which is at the same time a struggle against the disastrous policies of the ruling class. How Mr. Bittelman's bitter, name-calling attack on MR contributes to this end we frankly do not understand.

We have no intention of answering Mr. Bittelman in kind. We want no quarrels with opponents of current American ruling-class policies; and least of all with those who are in the front line of the struggle. But his criticisms of MR certainly call for a dispassionate reply. As we have already indicated, we welcome criticism. One of the great weaknesses of the American Left has long been an extreme paucity of genuine discussion of important questions. Mr. Bittelman's criticism *does* deal with important questions, and it deserves a carefully considered answer. In what follows, we have concentrated attention on what seem to us to be the central issues raised by Mr. Bittelman.*

Criticism of the Soviet Union. In our introductory statement, "Where We Stand" (MR, May 1949), we said:

* A large part of Mr. Bittelman's criticism is directed at Paul Sweezy's articles on American capitalism. A separate reply dealing with this criticism begins on p. 220 below.

We find completely unrealistic the view of those who call themselves socialists, yet imagine that socialism can be built on an international scale by fighting it where it already exists. This is the road to war, not to socialism. On the other hand, we do not accept the view that the USSR is above criticism, simply because it is socialist. We believe in, and shall be guided by, the principle that the cause of socialism has everything to gain and nothing to lose from a full and frank discussion of shortcomings, as well as accomplishments, of socialist countries and socialist parties everywhere.

Mr. Bittelman calls this the "‘criticize Russia’ slogan of the imperialists and of their Trotskyite and Titoite agents." It is objectionable, he argues, for two reasons: first, because it gives aid and comfort to the enemies of socialism and the Soviet Union; second, "as to real and honest criticism of shortcomings," the peoples and leaders of the Soviet Union do the job themselves, "criticism and self-criticism [being] systematically practiced and cultivated in all fields of Soviet life from top to bottom and bottom to top." (PA, May 1951, p. 35.)

The two reasons seem to cancel each other. Obviously the enemies of socialism and the Soviet Union seize upon criticism of any kind and use it for their own purposes. This is not, however, regarded as sufficient grounds for the Soviet Union to abandon the principle of criticism and self-criticism. We do not see why a different principle should apply to socialists outside the Soviet Union.

But this does not dispose of the problem. There are different kinds of criticism. At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that the main kinds are destructive and constructive. Destructive criticism tries, by harping on real or alleged shortcomings, to destroy or at least create enmity toward the object of criticism. Constructive criticism tries to uncover shortcomings so that in the future they may be remedied or avoided, but it is always careful to put the shortcomings in their proper context and not to allow them to form the basis for a total judgment. It goes without saying, we think, that there is no place for *destructive* criticism inside the socialist movement. But we see no reason why any individual, group, or country in the socialist movement should be, or *should want to be*, immune to constructive criticism, provided it is constructive, no matter what the source.

The right to criticize must, of course, be exercised with due caution and after taking full account of the existing situation. With all of capitalism's propaganda guns trained on the USSR, socialists obviously have a special obligation not to manufacture ammunition

for them. The French philosopher, Merleau-Ponty, was absolutely right, we believe, when he said a few years ago:

All criticism of Communism or of the USSR which makes use of isolated facts, without placing them in their context and in relation to the problems facing the USSR—all apology for the democratic regimes which passes by in silence their violent intervention in the rest of the world, or seeks to justify this intervention by a moral double standard, in a word all politics which does not seek to "comprehend" the rival societies in their totality can serve only to mask the problem of capitalism, in reality threatens the very existence of the USSR, and must be treated as an act of war. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanisme et Terreur*, Paris, 1947, pp. 196-97.)

But this does not mean that all who are resolutely opposed to war on the Soviet Union must renounce altogether the right to critical discussion; it means only that they must take all possible precautions against abusing the right.

This is our position on the problem of criticism within the socialist movement. We will leave it to readers to judge whether we have lived up to it in editing MR.

Relations among Socialist States. Mr. Bittelman quotes as follows from our article, "The Communist Manifesto after 100 years":

We cannot yet state as a fact that this new world order [socialism] will be one from which international enmity will have vanished, and the quarrel between Yugoslavia and the other socialist countries of eastern Europe may seem to point to an opposite conclusion. The present status of international relations, however, is so dominated by the division of the world into two systems and the preparation of both sides for a possible "final" conflict, and the existence of more than one socialist country is such a recent phenomenon, that we shall do well to reserve judgment on the import of the Yugoslav case. (MR, August 1949, pp. 113-114.)

Mr. Bittelman attacks this statement with special vigor. It "already contains the elements of Titoism." Our "doubts whether international enmity will vanish in a socialist world are not only fantastic, but they reflect a background of orientation which, unless checked in time, must lead inevitably into the camp of the imperialist warmongers." Moreover,

to project the possibility of conflicts between socialist states, a monstrous assumption both theoretically and practically; and to consider that the fascist Tito gang is building socialism in Yugoslavia when it was fully evident even in August 1949

(the date of the *Monthly Review* article under discussion) that the Tito clique was restoring capitalism to Yugoslavia and preparing to sell the country to Wall Street; to do these things is, at least objectively, to help Wall Street use Titoism to prepare the new world war, the war against the Soviet Union. (PA, May 1951, pp. 37-38.)

Mr. Bittelman raises two entirely separate questions here. One relates to the possibility of conflicts among socialist states. The other relates to the situation in Yugoslavia *after* the break with the Cominform.

We see nothing "fantastic" or "monstrous" or even remarkable about the suggestion that conflicts among socialist states are possible. Where degrees of industrialization and standards of living differ widely—as they are bound to do for a long time, even after capitalism has been superseded—there are obvious national and regional conflicts of interest over many questions of priority and relative rates of development. Socialism has no magic formulas for solving these problems: they have to be worked out in practice. The big question is whether they can be worked out peacefully and harmoniously. In the Yugoslav case, they were certainly not worked out harmoniously. But there were so many other factors involved, most of which stemmed from the cold war, that it would be absurd to draw general conclusions about relations among socialist states from this case.

The course of events in Yugoslavia since the break is an entirely different subject. We have all along maintained the view—and we expressed it to top-ranking Yugoslavs in this country in 1949—that a small and economically weak country like Yugoslavia could not remain neutral, that it would have to belong to the socialist camp or to the capitalist camp, and that it was pure illusion to imagine that Yugoslavia could join the capitalist camp and at the same time travel in the direction of socialism. This diagnosis has nothing to do with the question of whose "fault" the break was; its validity does not depend upon whether Yugoslavia walked out of or was expelled from the socialist camp (or whether or not it was ever honestly in the socialist camp); it holds quite regardless of the subjective intentions of the various Yugoslav leaders.

What has happened in Yugoslavia in the last three years fully confirms our view. Yugoslavia has become increasingly dependent upon American economic (and now military) support. Trends toward socialism have been interrupted and reversed. The Tito regime is becoming less and less distinguishable from a traditional Balkan dictatorship. The tragedy of Yugoslavia is well summed up by Doreen Warriner, a British economist who is probably the leading

western authority on the peasant economies of eastern Europe, in the following words:

Without the alliance with the Soviet Union, the revolution [in eastern Europe] could never have been carried through, the industrial development of the region never have begun. The western powers, had they any real influence, would certainly have restored near-fascist regimes, as they had done in Greece. To break the Soviet alliance, as Tito has done, means to strike a blow against socialism, against the planned development of the region, and to open the way for a return of the past. (Doreen Warriner, *Revolution in Eastern Europe*, London, 1950, p. 62.)

The Condition of the American Working Class. In the course of criticizing our views on the reasons why the socialist revolution has been delayed in the advanced capitalist countries, Mr. Bittelman makes the following statement:

Is it not incumbent upon Marxists—and the editors of MR seemingly wish to be Marxists—to examine the process of relative and absolute impoverishment of the American working class through the imperialist era? Had they done so, the editors would have discovered that the lot of the *mass* of the working class, not the corrupted aristocracy, has grown worse, not better, absolutely and relatively. (PA, May 1951, p. 39.)

Actually, we have spent a good deal of time studying the history of the American working class, including the development of its living standards. We do not think the facts square with Mr. Bittelman's view. Leaving aside the question of whether the working class is *relatively* better or worse off today than it was, say, fifty years ago, we think there can be no doubt at all that its material standard of living has *absolutely* increased in that period. The index of real annual earnings of manufacturing workers, as calculated by the Labor Research Association, which certainly has no pro-capitalist bias, went up from 100 in 1899 to 161 in 1946. (*Trends in American Capitalism*, p. 98.) At the same time, the average length of the working day was substantially reduced. True, the manufacturing worker undoubtedly fared better than the working class as a whole. But after all reasonable qualifications have been made, we see no reason to question the view that the American working class enjoys a higher material standard of living today than it did at the end of the nineteenth century. The increase is, of course, nowhere as great as it could have been if economic resources had been rationally utilized, depressions had been eliminated, and incomes had been more equally distributed; but this does not mean that we are entitled to fly in the face of the facts and deny that an increase did take place.

In our judgment, this fact of a rising material standard of living—together with relatively considerable, though now declining, opportunities for individual workers to rise in the class structure—goes a long way toward accounting for the weakness of the American socialist movement. It has had a large share in shaping the psychology of the American worker; it helps to explain the character of our labor movement. We think that any one who wants to contribute to building a stronger socialist movement in this country in the future would do well to recognize these things and learn from them.

One more point in this connection: Suppose we were to accept Mr. Bittelman's view that the living standards of the American working class have been steadily deteriorating "for the whole of the present century." How then could we explain the weakness of the American socialist movement? Is it not clear that we should have to assume either a monumental stupidity on the part of the American worker, or an incredible incompetence on the part of the leadership of the American socialist movement? Mr. Bittelman can hardly wish to imply explanations of this kind; we prefer to believe that he has not thought through his position to its logical conclusion.

"*The Fruits of the Bourgeois Epoch.*" Mr. Bittelman quotes as follows from the conclusion of our article on the *Communist Manifesto*:

There is even a danger that in the heat of the struggle some of the finest fruits of the bourgeois epoch will be temporarily lost to mankind, instead of being extended and universalized by the spread of the socialist revolution. Intellectual freedom and personal security guaranteed by law—to name only the most precious—have been virtually unknown to the people who are now blazing the trail to socialism; in the advanced countries, they are seriously jeopardized by the onslaughts of reaction and counter-revolution. No one can say whether they will survive the period of tension and strife through which we are now passing, or whether they will have to be rediscovered and recaptured in a more rational world of the future. (MR, August 1949, p. 120.)

Mr. Bittelman finds this "really a remarkable outpouring" and goes on to comment as follows:

Most outrageous is the insinuation that these "finest fruits of the bourgeois epoch" may be lost because the people who are now blazing the path to socialism—the peoples of the Soviet Union, the People's Democracies of Europe, the people of China—have not had any extended historic periods of bourgeois democracy. (PA, May 1951, p. 40.)

Mr. Bittelman has misunderstood our meaning. The danger of temporarily losing the finest fruits of the bourgeois epoch comes not because countries with no extended experience of bourgeois democracy are now blazing the path to socialism, but because those who *have* had an extended historic experience of bourgeois democracy—and in the first instance, the United States of America—are renouncing their own heritage and threatening to destroy the very roots of civilization itself. We do not blame, and never have blamed, the peoples who are building socialism for the horrors of our time; we blame those who are making the task infinitely more dangerous and difficult than it ought or needs to be.

Mr. Bittelman closes his discussion of this issue with the "impression" that ours is "an attitude which has the peculiar capacity to forget that fascism, colonial slavery and national oppression, atom-bomb diplomacy and imperialist war are also 'fruits of the bourgeois epoch.'" (PA, May 1951, p. 41.) This impression was based on statements in our article on the *Manifesto* which was published in August 1949. Between then and May 1951, when Mr. Bittelman's criticism appeared, some twenty issues of MR were published. Would it not be reasonable to ask Mr. Bittelman to check and see whether his "impression" was justified or not?

Pessimism and Realism. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Bittelman makes the statement that "*Monthly Review* propagates pessimism, lack of faith in the working class and in the masses of the people, political passivity, withdrawal from struggle, and the tendency to 'wait for better times.'" (PA, May 1951, p. 52.) Directly, this seems to be based on what we wrote in winding up the "Cooperation on the Left" discussion (MR, December 1950, pp. 357-360), but no doubt Mr. Bittelman means it to apply quite generally to MR's contents, and especially to its editorial policies.

It would be pointless for us to deny Mr. Bittelman's statement, since it is less a question of ascertained (or ascertainable) fact than of a subjective conclusion which every reader of MR is certainly entitled to draw for himself. We can say, however, that we never had the intention or desire to propagate the attitudes which Mr. Bittelman accuses us of propagating, and we hope Mr. Bittelman's reaction is not representative of MR's readership.

But it is possible that Mr. Bittelman's charge conceals a deeper difference of opinion between him and us. We have said on a number of occasions that the American Left has lost much ground, both absolutely and relatively, in the years since World War II. It is now being subjected to persecution of near-fascist intensity. For all practical purposes, the Communist Party has already been illegalized,

and further inroads on the traditional freedoms of speech and political organization are in prospect. The other side of the coin is that reaction is riding high and is daily strengthening its controls over both domestic and foreign policies. It would be pleasant to be able to report that a powerful mass movement, led by the working class, is growing up to combat these disastrous trends. But it is not so. The leadership of the trade unions is collaborating in the so-called "defense" program and seems not to be threatened by any serious rank-and-file revolt. It is not internal popular pressure but fear of the external consequences—loss of allies and ultimate defeat—that has prevented the ruling class from plunging us into a world war.

Perhaps it is for saying these things that Mr. Bittelman accuses us of propagating pessimism and so on. If this is the case, we must disagree. We are faced by grim facts in this country today, the grimmest in our national history. The outlook is at best uncertain: we may be in for a long "time of troubles" before we emerge into the light of a better day. As things look now, the United States, the most advanced capitalist country in the world, may be the last country to enter the socialist epoch. We believe that this situation must be frankly recognized and squarely faced if the American Left is ever to be re-built. Mr. Bittelman may call this pessimism; we call it realism.

Where Is Monthly Review Going? Mr. Bittelman suspects us of

an orientation to try to build up a cadre and resources for the launching at some future date of an anti-Marxist party moving in the direction of a Titoite set-up, acceptable to, and approved by, Wall Street's State and Justice Departments. (PA, May 1951, p. 53.)

He can set his mind at rest. Our orientation is not toward launching any kind of party, anti-Marxist or otherwise. We are trying, and will keep on trying, to do two things: (1) to contribute to a better understanding on the part of the American progressive movement of what is going on in the world, both nationally and internationally; (2) to present socialist analyses and views in clear, simple language so that they can be understood and absorbed by our politically interested countrymen.

Mr. Bittelman would doubtless say, as other readers of MR have said, that all this is no substitute for political action. Of course it isn't. We are trying to publish a magazine, not to organize an action group. If we succeed in our aims, readers of MR will have a better understanding of the problems they face and a keener realization of the necessity for action to solve them. They will take

their understanding and their realization into whatever action groups are open to them, and they will make those groups more effective.

We believe that there is a need for a socialist magazine with these aims in the United States today. MR's growing circulation and the loyal support of its readers seem to indicate that we are not alone in this belief.

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

BY PAUL M. SWEEZY

Alexander Bittelman devotes about forty percent of his article, "Where Is the *Monthly Review* Going?" (*Political Affairs*, May 1951) to a section headed "Certain Aspects of American Capitalism." This section is concerned entirely with a number of articles written by me and published in MR during its first two years. In what follows I shall concentrate on trying to analyze what seems to me to be the basic difference between us.

This difference centers on the following question: To what extent and by what means can the capitalist class, acting through the state, control the capitalist economy?

First, let me try to give my own answer to this question more clearly than I apparently succeeded in doing in the articles Mr. Bittelman criticizes.

The capitalist economy contains certain inherent and ineradicable contradictions. Basic among these is the tendency to expand the capacity to produce much more rapidly than the power to consume. The more mature the capitalist economy the stronger this tendency is. It translates itself into increasingly severe economic crises and depressions. The normal state of a very advanced capitalist country,

such as the United States had become by the interwar period, is chronic depression and mass unemployment.

If nothing were done about this state of chronic depression, the whole capitalist system would more or less rapidly disintegrate and a revolutionary situation would soon develop. The supporters of the system—the capitalist class as well as important elements from other classes, including the trade union leadership in the working class—are quick to recognize this deadly threat. Two possible courses of action *appear* to be open. One is the course of reform. Whatever the local variants, the core of the reform program always consists of a combination of public works and income redistribution. The other course is that of militarism and foreign expansionism. Logically, either course can be pursued to the point of making good, or compensating for, the deficit in consumption which the capitalist economy naturally tends to generate. The essence of capitalist politics soon becomes a struggle over which road to follow. During the Great Depression, when unemployment and unrest were at a maximum in the capitalist world, the United States chose the road of reform. That was the meaning of Roosevelt and the New Deal. At exactly the same time, Germany, the second most developed capitalist nation, chose the road of militarism and foreign expansionism. That was the meaning of Hitler and Nazism.

But, under capitalism, the road of reform is in reality a blind alley. The whole structure of the system stands in the way of large-scale reform. The levers of power are in the hands of the capitalists, and they refuse to permit anything but temporary palliatives. This explains why the New Deal never came within miles of solving the unemployment problem and was already coming to be generally recognized as a failure when World War II came to the rescue. With the New Deal bankrupt, American capitalism eagerly chose the road of militarism and foreign expansionism and has been travelling it ever since. The structure of the system, while it blocks reform, is altogether favorable to militarism and foreign expansionism. Military expenditures involve neither redistribution of income nor competition with private enterprise; jingoism and war hysteria create an atmosphere in which dissent can most readily be suppressed.

Hence we conclude that all roads lead eventually to the war-preparations economy as capitalism's answer to its own fundamental contradiction.

The war-preparations economy obviously works—up to a point. The American economy has been booming pretty steadily ever since the end of World War II (as it had been, of course, during the war years). The capitalist class is thoroughly sold on it and has no

intention of going back to the old days of peace-economy—and depression.*

But at this point, certain further questions arise: What is the nature of the war-preparations economy? Is such an economy susceptible to crises? If so, are they of the same kind as the crises which beset a "normal" capitalist economy? What is the long-run outlook for the war-preparations economy?

I don't pretend to have full answers to these questions, and the following ideas are subject to revision in the light of further theoretical and factual study—study which, I need hardly add, is very much needed.

The element which the war-preparations economy has and the "normal" capitalist economy lacks is massive waste in the form of government expenditures on armaments and unproductive military personnel. From the standpoint of the functioning of the capitalist economy, this waste has, in the first instance, the same effect as an identical quantity of consumption. Hence, along with the usual forces affecting the magnitude of accumulation and consumption, the factors which determine the magnitude of military waste have to be taken into account in assessing the nature and tendencies of the war-preparations economy. What are these factors?

If military waste were purely and simply a balance wheel used by the capitalists to keep the system from degenerating into a state of chronic depression, then we might expect that its magnitude would be nicely adjusted to maintain precisely the state of underemployment which is most favorable to capitalist interests. But of course this is a completely unrealistic conception. Actually, the magnitude of military waste, and hence the course of the war-preparations economy, depend not only on the state of the domestic economy but also on a whole series of internal (political) and external (economic and political) factors over many of which capitalists have little or no control. It follows that it is extremely difficult to generalize about what will actually happen: every situation is to a certain extent unique and has to be examined on its own terms.

Nevertheless, certain broad alternatives can be more or less confidently indicated.

First, the war-preparations economy may simply be the pre-

* This, incidentally, is what I meant when I said that "American capitalism has at last found its panacea in the creation of a permanent war-preparations economy." (MR, November 1950, p. 340.) When Mr. Bittelman says that this really amounts to saying "that American capitalism has found the secret of eternal life" he is strictly on his own. I thought that the use of the word "panacea" made the irony sufficiently plain, but apparently I was mistaken.

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

lude to full-scale war and—as Mr. Bittelman quite rightly adds—national disaster.

Second, the capitalists may not be able to maintain a sufficient rate of military waste—for example, because of effective working-class resistance to a war policy. In this case, the war-preparations economy will break down in a depression of the “normal” type.

Third, the capitalists may gear their war-preparations to an impossible program of world domination. In this case, military waste will rise more or less steadily and will increasingly encroach on the civilian economy, forcing a reduction in the standard of living of the masses and eventually even squeezing the capitalists’ own accumulation. This is the situation with which we are now faced in the United States, and the crucial question is therefore: What are the prospects for an economy which is *increasingly* devoted to and dominated by war preparations?

Obviously, this third case can be quickly transformed into either one of the first two cases: war itself, or depression of the “normal” type because of successful political resistance to the war program.

But suppose that neither of these things happens quickly. What then? Will there be an economic crack-up of a type peculiar to the war-preparations economy?

This is possible. A capitalist country may become demoralized by long-continued inflationary pressure. Controls may break down. Black-marketing and corruption may become the rule. Prices may get out of hand, destroying the normal function of contracts and debts. The whole capitalist economy may, so to speak, come apart at the seams. This is more or less what happened in many countries during the last war, particularly those which were wholly or partly occupied by the Germans or the Japanese. Such a situation naturally bears hardest on the masses and sooner or later calls forth a revolutionary political response.

But it would be unrealistic to assume that the United States is anywhere near a condition of this kind today. There are, to be sure, growing signs of demoralization—cynicism and corruption have never been so rampant in this country as they are now. But we must assume that the American ruling class still is, and for some time to come will be, capable of establishing and maintaining the kind of controls which are necessary to keep the war-preparations economy from coming apart at the seams.

No one knows *how long* this state of affairs can continue. But we *do* know that it is a completely unstable state of affairs which *certainly cannot go on indefinitely*. Sooner or later, it must give way to war, or to “normal” depression because of effective political resist-

ance to the war program, or to an inflationary crack-up of the war-preparations economy itself.

One further word in this connection. These possible courses of development are not really so mutually exclusive as they may at first sight appear to be. An inflationary crack-up does not come overnight; it develops more or less gradually. As it creeps up, it is likely to drive the capitalists to more and more desperate expedients, hence to increase the danger of war. It is also likely to arouse the masses to the true situation, hence to stimulate effective political resistance. Paradoxical as it may sound, therefore, we can conclude that the war-preparations economy *simultaneously* approaches all three climaxes: war, "normal" depression, and inflationary crack-up. What the actual outcome will be, no one knows or can know. Similarly, how long the process will continue, no one knows or can know.

This analysis can be compared with Mr. Bittelman's. According to him, this is "the outlook":

The currently developing war economy in the United States leads to a new world war, and national disaster, if the American people, headed by the working class, do not succeed in curbing Wall Street's drive to a new world war. On the other hand, if Wall Street is allowed to continue to build a war economy . . . without the actual outbreak of a new world war, then the country will inevitably be faced with a devastating economic crisis. It will be faced with an economic crash of catastrophic proportions, with bankruptcy and economic ruin. (PA, May 1951, p. 46.)

The trouble with this, as I see it, is not that it is necessarily wrong. It can be interpreted in such a way as to make it quite unexceptionable. But it can also be interpreted to mean that if enormous expenditures for war preparations are continued we will soon be in for something like a repetition of the 1929-33 crash. *This*, I believe, is altogether wrong; it is precisely the mistake that was so commonly made about the Nazi war-preparations economy by left-wing writers during the thirties. If Hitler kept on with his arms program, Germany would soon be bankrupt, and so forth and so on. Actually, what would have produced a crash in Germany in the period 1935-39 was not the continuation but the cessation of the war program. And the same is true in this country today. Unquestionably, *sooner or later* any capitalist war-preparations economy will founder. But the process is much more complicated than Mr. Bittelman's dogmatic assertion would lead one to believe. And this is a field, I think, in which a misleading economic analysis can lead to the most serious political mistakes.

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

Let me now turn more briefly to two other points.

Mr. Bittelman objects to my calling the period since World War II a new stage of imperialism, and I agree that it was not a very helpful suggestion. What we have to do with is really not so much a new stage of capitalism or imperialism as a new stage of world politics. What is specifically novel is the changed relationship between imperialism as a whole and the rising international socialist system. This changed relationship between the two great world systems has profound repercussions on the international relations of the capitalist system, and it was this fact to which I was directing attention. Inter-imperialist conflict still exists, of course, but now it is a factor making for peace (since it weakens the capacity of the capitalist camp to make war) where formerly it was *the* primary war-making force.

I don't know whether Mr. Bittelman would agree with this or not. In any case, it offers not the slightest justification for his saying that my "'fourth stage' of capitalism and 'new stage' of imperialism really . . . constitute an attempt to revive the old and discredited Kautskyan proposition — revisionist, opportunist, anti-Marxist—of a super-imperialist phase of capitalism, which abolishes all inter-imperialist contradictions and organizes the economy and politics of world capitalism." All this is a pure figment of Mr. Bittelman's imagination.

Mr. Bittelman's final criticism is directed at my analysis of the overall aims and strategy of the American ruling class in the present world situation. A number of other people have also criticized this analysis; and the Editors of *Cahiers Internationaux*, in publishing a translation of the article in which it appeared (MR, November 1950, pp. 336-344), added a long note taking issue with some of my leading arguments. All these criticisms, together with actual developments in American policy, especially since the MacArthur affair, have led me to reconsider the questions at issue. Rather than answer Mr. Bittelman's specific points, it would seem more fruitful to attempt a brief reformulation of my position.

First, let me quote the summary of my central thesis as it appeared in the article of November 1950:

The American ruling class is now thoroughly committed to the war-preparations economy as the only possible method of maintaining world capitalism. The way the method works is, first, by counteracting the deadly tendency of chronic depression at the center [i.e. in the United States itself]; and, second, by supplying an enormous force to police the periphery [as, for example, in Korea and Indo-China]. Policing the periphery, of course, means instant readiness to wage counter-revolutionary

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war against any and all peoples who show an inclination to break away from the capitalist orbit. But this is not the only kind of war threat which the set-up generates. As the military machine grows it gives birth and nourishment to the doctrine of preventive war, a doctrine which has fatal implications alike for world peace and for world capitalism. (MR, November 1950, pp. 343-344.)

I don't see that any of this is necessarily wrong. There can be no doubt that it is military spending and nothing else that is staving off a depression in this country. Likewise, it is clear that the United States is ready to use any means, including war, to keep countries from leaving the capitalist camp. Finally, the MacArthur hearings clearly showed the alarming extent to which the idea of preventive war has permeated American military thinking: in this connection, it should be stressed again and again that the difference between the MacArthurites and the administration generals is one of degree and not of principle.

But this is not the whole story, and by implying that it is, my article was wrong and misleading. The doctrine of preventive war does not spring solely from the military, as the article stated. On the contrary, it is deeply rooted in the ruling class as a whole. This is clearly shown by a proper analysis of the policy of the Truman administration as first presented in Acheson's famous "seven points." (The seven points were summarized in MR, March 1951, p. 481 and again last month, p. 166.) Each of the seven points calls for far-reaching concessions by the Soviet Union, and taken together they amount to a demand that the USSR submit unconditionally to United States domination of the world. The logical implication of a policy based on the seven points is that the United States must arm to the teeth and, having built the necessary military strength, must precipitate a showdown with the Soviet Union. This, in turn, will lead either to Soviet surrender or to war. This is the policy of preventive war in all but name. The only difference is that the outspoken preventive warriors are generally in favor of rushing ahead regardless of consequences, while large sections of the ruling class, represented by Truman and Acheson, have a more realistic appreciation of what war with the Soviet Union would mean under present conditions.

It should be noted that we cannot conclude from this analysis that world war is inevitable. True, the strategy of American capitalism is thoroughly aggressive and aims at world domination. But the overwhelming military preponderance which would be needed to carry out this strategy successfully and achieve this aim is in all likelihood unattainable. There are several reasons for this. First, the

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defensive military strength of the socialist world is enormous and may well grow as fast as or even faster than the offensive strength of the United States. Second, the United States necessarily depends upon allies for bases and manpower, and the ties binding the capitalist alliance together grow weaker rather than stronger with the passage of time. Third, the intense and growing yearning of the peoples of the world for peace makes a policy of aggression increasingly risky. In short, the strength of the socialist world plus the contradictions of the capitalist world plus the growing power of the peace movement may yet force the American ruling class to moderate its ambitions for world domination. This is the real hope for peace.

It is a matter of some interest to ask why I made the error of attributing defensive aims to the American ruling class and hence of locating the source of aggressive doctrines, including especially the doctrine of preventive war, in the military machine. The answer, I think, is relatively simple.

If we view the present world scene in historical perspective, it is quite clear that capitalism is in retreat and on the defensive. This obviously applies also to American capitalism which now bears the whole brunt of supporting and maintaining world capitalism. But one cannot conclude from this that the political and military strategy of American capitalism must necessarily be defensive. The cornered rat becomes savagely aggressive, and so it is with capitalism.

Of course, a policy of aggression cannot succeed. But it can bring disaster to the world. The rulers of America must be shown, in advance and conclusively, that they cannot win and that they themselves will be the special victims of the catastrophe they threaten to let loose. This is the task of the peace movement throughout the world, and therein lies the hope of peace.

Fabulous! Fabulous!
I've come into a world of pure fantasy
Where people magically beget
All that on which their hearts are set.
Then having got of that a lot
They cannot get what they've begot—
What!

—The genie in *Flahooley*, musical comedy
by E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, 1951.

WHAT AN INCREDIBLE FOLLY!

I feel sure that the time will come when people will find it difficult to believe that a rich community, such as ours, having such command over external nature, could have submitted to live such a mean, shabby life as we do. And once for all, there is nothing in our circumstances save the hunting of profit that drives us into it. It is profit which draws men into enormous unmanageable aggregations called towns, for instance; profit which crowds them up when they are there in quarters without gardens or open spaces; profit which won't take the most ordinary precautions against wrapping a whole district in a cloud of sulphurous smoke; which condemns so many to live in houses idiotically cramped and confined at best, and at worst in houses for whose wretchedness there is no name.

I say it is almost incredible that we should bear such gross stupidity as this; nor should we if we could help it. We shall not bear it when the workers get out of their heads that they are but an appendage to profit grinding; that the more profits that are made the more work at higher wages there will be for them, and therefore, all the incredible filth, disorder and degradation of modern civilization are signs of their prosperity. So far from that, they are signs of their slavery. When they are no longer slaves they will, as a matter of course, claim that every man and every family should be generously lodged; that every child should be able to play in a garden; that the houses should by their obvious decency and order be ornaments to nature, not disfigurements of it.

All this, of course, would mean the people—that is, all society—duly organized, having in its own hands the means of production, to be owned by no individual, but used by all as occasion called for its use; and only on those terms.

—William Morris

 "FREE WORLD" DEPARTMENT

Tallahassee, Fla., Aug. 10. — Scurvy is cropping up in Tallahassee, the capital city of citrus-producing Florida. Scurvy is caused by a deficiency of vitamin C which is abundant in citrus fruit.

A recent survey in St. Lucie and Martin counties—in the heart of the rich Indian River fruit and vegetable section—showed 49 per cent of the children lacked a vitamin that could be obtained by eating an orange a day.

—New York World-Telegram, August 10, 1951

(continued from inside front cover)

survival, *unless* we get enough additional circulation to bring down unit costs and counterbalance swelling outlays.

May we, therefore, urgently call your attention to the two Xmas gift leaflets included with this issue? You can help MR get the additional circulation it needs and at the same time solve a part of your gift problem by taking advantage of the combination offer: a \$3-subscription to one friend and a \$3-book to another—both for only \$4. We made the same offer at Xmas time last year, and more than 600 readers took advantage of it. Let's see if we can't do even better this year.

One subscriber writes:

Unless I'm mistaken you do not tell us an "addressograph" date of expiration. When we know at all times, it is possible for us not only to avoid expiration notices but also to anticipate renewal when funds are available, as some of us make a practice of doing. Some magazines have signs or numbers that mean something to *themselves* but not to their subscribers. As you very well know, it costs money to prod us.

Technically, our reader is wrong. We do give the date of expiration right under the name on the envelope in which MR reaches you. But he may well be right that to most readers, this date looks like a meaningless code. We recognized this problem some time ago and began the changeover to a straight date for new subs and renewals. Eventually the whole list will be on that basis. But most subs still have a hyphenated number which may not mean anything to the uninitiated. However, it isn't hard to interpret these numbers. For example, this issue is Vol. 3, No. 7, and if your sub expires with this issue the number under your name is 3 - 7. If it expires with the end of Vol. 3 (April 1952), your number is 3 - 12. Please check your number and figure out your expiration date. If it's anywhere near, please renew.

Just received from another subscriber:

On the top of p. 161 of the September issue is an enticing thought: **THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEDBAITING.** Now I never thought very long or seriously about this danger, but when you stop to think about it you're absolutely right: anyone who would bait a guy's going to bed is obviously a fascist-type personality, a prude, terrified of women, dominated by a vicious mother, and a menace to the Left!

Ever since receiving this communication, we have been breathlessly waiting to see if MR wouldn't finally make one of those little end-of-the-column squibs in *The New Yorker*. Should be headed something like "One Under Every Red."

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